St Agnes School Anti-Bullying Policy 2014

Our Vision Statement:

In the light of the Gospel,
“To Let Our Light Shine”
through
Life long teaching and learning
Life enriching relationships and a
Life giving spiritually

In the spirit of our School Mission Statement, our Relationships Policy and our beliefs about behaviour and learning, at St Agnes, in partnership with parents, staff and students, we will strive to be a community who create a safe environment by:

- treating each other with dignity and respect and building relationships that are life giving
- adopting a proactive rather than a reactive approach to bullying, in the first instance, empowering our children to be successful now, resilient and for the future
- working together to create a shared understanding of content, processes and procedures contained in this policy
- using The Method of Shared Concern approach to solving and resolving bullying situations - should we have a problem, we will aim to solve it with the whole social group in which the incidents are occurring (see Appendix 1)

Our Anti-Bullying Beliefs at St Agnes:

- bullying is unacceptable; no one ever deserves to be bullied and all students have the right to feel safe
- bullying is everyone’s concern
- all students have the responsibility to help each other make positive behaviour choices in the classroom, out in the playground and when using technology and social media
- all adults have the responsibility to support the growth and resilience of all students and to respond to all bullying issues appropriately, as outlined in this policy

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is a “systematic and repeated oppression and humiliation, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons”. (Rigby, 2010)

Bullying is when someone has power over another person by hurting or harming that person, more than just once. The bullying is intentional and there is an imbalance of power (eg. someone bigger, stronger, older, more confident etc). Bullying is continuing to ‘pick on’ someone, torment them or exclude them, so that the person feels helpless.

Cyber bullying is a mode of bullying. It is when bullying, as described above, occurs virtually through the use of technological devices such as mobile phones, computers or other digital communication eg. text messaging, social networking, web pages.

At times, real life and cyber bullying may co-occur when devices are used to share offensive digital communication or when digital communication is talked about with other people.

At St Agnes, we agree that if you are a bystander who is involved in a bullying incident or you witness bullying and do not report the incident, your behaviour could be seen as supporting the bullying. Therefore, we encourage all to be ‘upstanders’ ie standing up for behaviours that show respect for all.
Forms of Bullying

Physical: When a person or group of people use physical actions to bully, such as but not limited to hitting, poking, tripping or punching. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone’s belongings is also physical bullying.

Verbal: When a person uses repeated or systematic name-calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse.

Covert: When a person lies about someone, spreads rumours, plays a nasty joke that makes the other person feel humiliated or powerless, mimics or deliberately excluding someone.

Psychological: Threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.

Cyber: Using technology, as mentioned above, to bully verbally, socially or psychologically.

(Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying DETA 2010)

Bullying may relate to race, religion, culture, appearance, health conditions, sexual orientation, home circumstances, learning needs, disabilities or gender. (Safe to Learn DCSF, 2007)

What is NOT Bullying at St Agnes School?

It is important to identify what bullying is NOT. Dr Ken Rigby (2010) identifies that “for some people the term ‘bullying’ is a highly emotive term and its use may lead to an over-reaction.” The term bullying is often used to describe behaviour that, while unacceptable and needs to be addressed, it is not bullying.

The National Centre Against Bullying acknowledges that while the following behaviours are often upsetting to those involved, they do NOT constitute bullying:

- mutual arguments and disagreements where there is no imbalance of power
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence

Role Responsibilities

All members of our community have responsibilities in the successful implementation of our Anti-bullying policy. These include:

Responsibilities of Students

- to be kind and respectful to all other children and Staff at my school
- to tell an adult if I feel unsafe
- to say “Stop it’ if I see someone bullying another child
- to be an upstander, not a bystander
- to not bully others
- to have an understanding of bullying, bullying behaviours, bystanders, upstanders and cyber bullying
- to appropriately report incidents if I believe I am being bullied, or as a bystander to a bullying incident
- to appropriately report incidents as an upstander
- as an upstander, help someone being bullied
- to abide by the signed school digital citizenship contract

Responsibilities of Staff

- to have a whole school policy that meets the expectation of the school community
- to support the anti-bullying policy
- to promote a positive school culture
• to model, educate and suggest appropriate, positive anti-bullying behaviours and supportive upstander behaviours
• to use teaching and learning opportunities to teach positive behaviours and to address unacceptable behaviours and bullying
• to listen to all student reports and watch for signs of possible bullying
• to ensure that children are supervised adequately
• to listen openly if a parent comes to talk about a possible bullying incident
• to communicate with parents if their child is involved in or at risk of cyber-bullying
• to respond to all reported and observed incidents of bullying as set out in this policy under Responding to Bullying. This includes identification of potential bullying by reporting through the school Bullying Report (See Appendix 2)

Responsibilities of Parents

• to support the information outlined in the St Agnes School Anti-Bullying Policy
• to develop an understanding of what is bullying and what unacceptable behaviours are not bullying
• to model, educate and discuss appropriate, positive anti-bullying behaviours
• to watch for signs of possible bullying
• to encourage and support my child to inform a teacher if they are being bullied or witness bullying as a bystander or speak on my child’s behalf about bullying if the child is not confident to do so
• to support my child in being an upstander
• to support my child to comply with the signed school’s digital citizenship contract
• to communicate with the school if I am aware of any cyber-bullying incidences
• to work in partnership with the school to support my child in the positive use of social media and technologies
• to have confidence that the school will take any complaint of bullying seriously through investigation and will involve us as parents in the ongoing support of my child if there has been a case of bullying
St Agnes Proactive Anti-bullying Strategies

Strategies to actively prevent bullying include:

1. Primary Prevention Education
2. Early Intervention Strategies
3. Intervention Procedures
4. Restoration of Well-Being

1. Primary Prevention Education

Primary prevention education includes the teaching of curriculum content particular to supporting the resilience of students. At St Agnes, we teach the ACARA General Capabilities which outline this content. These include the:

- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Capability
- Critical and Creative thinking

Resources that teachers use to support this teaching include:

- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support teaching of the elements of the ‘The St Agnes Way’
- St Agnes Way matrix
- Bounce Back program
- Circle Time
- You Can Do It program
- Cyber Education through regular whole school and in class Digital Citizenship lessons and activities
- Regular parent education via the school newsletter
- Senior Leadership program
- Buddy programs in some year levels
- School camps and excursions

2. Early Intervention Strategies

Early intervention strategies include:

- 2014 whole community review of the Anti-bullying policy including audit of whole community beliefs and experiences.
- Ongoing monitoring of policy and practices and promotion of whole school proactive strategies through the SWPBS Committee
- Mapping and planning for of potential risks including geographical areas and students at risk. At times this may include changes to duty areas, additional staff allocation or running of programs for targeted students. This occurs during each term at the SWPBS Committee Meeting.
- 2014 Launch of the whole school Anti-bullying Policy:
  - Parent Education through the school newsletter
  - Staff Education through Staff Meetings
  - Student Education through the Launch event and in class lessons
- Development and display of whole school anti-bullying posters.
- Intensive teaching and reminding of the school’s anti-bullying views at the beginning of each school year.

3. Intervention procedures

Intervention procedures are clearly outlined in the Process of Response Section of this document. These are the procedures that occur in the event that a bullying incident is identified.

4. Restoration of well-being

This includes supporting both the victim and perpetrator with educational and or therapeutic interventions in the event that they need additional support. This support may involve the teaming of the following people:
The particular supports and interventions would be articulated in the student’s individual plan by either:

i) A School Based Action Plan
ii) An Individual Behaviour Support Plan

**Process for Responding to Bullying at St Agnes**

When a bullying incident is reported or observed the following steps will be taken. This process may be accelerated according to student age and the seriousness of the incident.

1. **Potential bullying is reported**
   
   By victim, bystander, parent or other, to the classroom teacher

2. **Classroom teacher determines whether the report initially meets the guidelines and completes a Bullying Report. (Appendix 2)**
   
   Guidelines:
   - Has the child been hurt or harmed?
   - Is there a power imbalance?
   - Have there been repeated incidents resulting in hurt or harm?

3. **Classroom Teacher reports the potential bullying to the Principal or Assistant Principal.**
   
   The Principal will:
   - investigate students’ files
   - speak to relevant staff e.g. Class Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Support Teacher etc.
   - follow the Method of Shared Concern (Appendix 1)
   - record details of the incident
   - inform parents if bullying has occurred. If not bullying,
   - continue to monitor the situation, continue to provide support when appropriate
   - Principal to communicate outcome to Class Teacher and child/children

4. **If bullying continues OR the Principal feels a student requires extra support...**

3a) **Note:** If behaviour is violent OR criminal, leadership members will proceed in consultation with one or more of the following:
   - BCE Area Supervisor,
   - BCE Solicitors,
   - BCE Student Protection Consultants,
   - Outside agencies such as but not limited to The Queensland Police.

5. **Relevant Staff and Principal meet with parents of student/s exhibiting bullying behaviour.** Together determine goals and consequences in line with the Brisbane Catholic Education Positive Behaviour Support Policy via a school based *Individualised Behaviour Plan.*

   Relevant Staff, parents, student/s review progress and goals at agreed intervals.

5. **Relevant Staff and Principal meet with parents of the student/s victimised.** Strategies for empowerment and resilience formed and set goals in line with the Brisbane Catholic Education Process “What If I have a concern about a learner?” via a school based *Action Plan.*

   Relevant Staff, parents, student/s review progress and goals at agreed intervals.
How Will the School Respond to Cyber-bullying?

When a cyber-bullying incident occurs, students are advised to tell an adult immediately. In this instance, Staff will follow the Responding to Bullying Process outlines above.

If it is reported to the School, the School will assist to review the report and take appropriate action.

St Agnes advises parents to report any cyber-bullying or suspicious activity on the internet to the relevant authorities. For further information please refer to www.acma.gov.au and www.thinkuknow.org.au or contact your local Queensland Police station.

Reference to the St Agnes Positive Behaviour Policy

This Anti-bullying Policy is separate to the St Agnes School Based Positive Behaviour Policy. The St Agnes Positive Behaviour Policy has been developed in accordance with Brisbane Catholic Education ‘Student Behaviour Support Policy’ and ‘Student Behaviour Support Regulations and Guidelines’. For issues relating to continued non-compliance resulting in suspension and exclusion please refer to these documents.
Appendix 1

Method of Shared Concern

The following is a highly simplified account of the Method. Please see the article on our School Website for further information. (“The Method of Shared Concern as an Intervention Technique to Address Bullying in School: An Overview and Appraisal” K.Rigby, 2005). This method has been recommended for schools to utilise.

The Method of Shared Concern is an approach to resolving bully/victim problems, originally suggested by Pikas (2002). It involves a series of meetings with students suspected of being involved in a case of bullying.

1. The process can begin when an individual OR several students suspected of engaging in bullying a targeted person are identified. They often form a quite heterogeneous group.

2. Each is interviewed in turn. The practitioner begins by sharing a concern with each of the suspected bullies over the plight of the target.
   ‘It looks like Tom is having a hard time at school.’
   The suspected bully is asked to say what he or she is prepared to do to improve the situation. The practitioner then arranges a further meeting to assess progress.

3. After each of the suspected bullies has been interviewed the practitioner meets with the targeted student. Typically this person has become very dejected and needs help. At the interview it is explained that each of the suspected bullies has undertaken to help to improve matters. The practitioner expresses strong support. Nevertheless, the target is asked whether he or she may have contributed to the problem in some way.
   ‘Tom, I wonder if there is anything you might be doing to cause them to treat you badly’.
   In most cases the target is quite innocent but in about 20% of cases there has been some provocation.

4. After the practitioner has seen the suspected bullies again and ascertained that progress has been made, they are brought together for a meeting at which they are asked to decide among themselves what they are prepared to say to the target when he or she joins them.
   ‘I would like us now to make a plan for when we meet with Tom.’

5. At the subsequent ‘summit meeting’ with the target present the suspected bullies make an agreed statement or proposal to resolve the problem. This may be an apology or a statement that they will not continue to harm. The target may become very dejected and needs help. Be negotiated, as in the following scenario with a group of girls:
   ‘We are sorry, Joanne, but you haven’t been very nice to us, you know.’

6. Finally, the practitioner discusses with them how they can sustain the improved relationship and offers to help if any further problems arise. Needless to say, the situation still needs to be monitored.

Evaluation
The process requires several meetings with the students involved in the bullying, first as individuals, then in a group over a two-week period. Convicting students of bullying and administering ‘consequences’ in the form of sanctions or punishments is often seen as quicker. But unfortunately when this is done the bullying often continues in covert and damaging ways. The cases then need further attention and this can ultimately prove to be very time-consuming. It is claimed that the method of Shared Concern can produce enduring solutions.
Classroom Teacher Bullying Report

A bullying report was made to me:

Date and time: ______________________

By: ______________________

Method of Communication: __________________________ (if written, please attach a copy)

Details communicated to me about the potential bullying situation:

Discussion points:

Outcome of the discussion:

In my opinion this report of bullying indicated that:

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<th>Bullying includes ALL of the following:</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>The child has been hurt or harmed.</td>
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<td>There is a power imbalance (eg someone bigger, older, stronger, more confident etc)</td>
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<td>There have been repeated incidents resulting in hurt or harm (indicate examples of repetition if known)</td>
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Signed: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Please email to the Principal or Assistant Principal.
References


Rigby, K. (2010b) *Enhancing Responses to Bullying in Queensland Schools*, Department of Education and Training, Brisbane.